

ART OF WAR STUDIES
MILITARY ISSUES PAPER

EDUCATING THE MAGTF OFFICER

MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
MARINE AIR-GROUND TRAINING AND EDUCATION CENTER
MARINE CORPS COMBAT DEVELOPMENT COMMAND
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5050

SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE
MILITARY ISSUES RESEARCH PROJECT

BY

T. A. CAUGHAN
LTCOL USMC

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 2008		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2008 to 00-00-2008	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Educating the MAGTF Officer				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) United States Marine Corps, Command and-Staff College, Marine Corps University, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2076 South Street, Quantico, VA, 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 18	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Educating the MAGTF Officer

Theme: Before the Marine Corps can fully adopt a maneuver style of war fighting, it must meet the challenge of creating a truly integrated MAGTF. Now is the time to reeducate our officer corps to think, plan, and execute in MAGTF terms.

Thesis: The MAGTF Education Syllabus of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College does not adequately address the integration of the MAGTF subordinate element's capabilities. By studying the integration of the several subordinate capabilities the students will increase their understanding of the MAGTF as an entity while learning to fully employ its military potential.

Discussion: As a result of the Marine Corps' amphibious orientation, World War II experience, and post-Korean War evolution, the MAGTF has been GCE dominated for most of its life. Its internal relationships do not facilitate interaction between subordinate elements and may best be described as supporting-supported rather than as equal partnerships. The present generation of middle and senior leaders have grown up under this system. The MAGTF Education Syllabus of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College reinforces this view by adopting a functional approach to the study of MAGTF capabilities. This paper proposes that re-orienting the curriculum and dividing the subject into a group of facts and a body of concepts is a necessary point of departure. The two sub-courses are described in sequence. The first focuses on the specifics necessary to understand the mission capabilities, doctrine, and contentious issues associated with each capability. The second, following a chronological planning progression, focuses on the integration and synchronization of the MAGTFs subordinate capabilities onto a true MAGTF capability. The proposal recommends that a series of single service and Joint/Combined war gaming models be used by the students to apply the concepts examined.

Conclusion. The future viability of the MAGTF hinges on our officer's ability to bridge the boundaries which define our individual communities and create a truly synergistic MAGTF capability. Education is the key to institutionalizing this organizational change.

EDUCATING THE MAGTF OFFICER

The MAGTF doctrine is over 25 years old... It is after all the old 'force in readiness' concept of ground combat units supported by air. Since the introduction of air power into 20th century warfare, the Marine Corps, from the beginning, had considered aviation resources as complementing the ground forces for the highly flexible team that would ensue. There was never a question that 'aerial support' was an integral part of the amphibious operation as evidenced by it being a major chapter in the 1935 'Tentative Landing Operations Manual'.¹

In June, 1950 the Marine Corps' first modern MAGTF, the First Provisional Marine Brigade, was committed to combat operations in the defence of the Pusan Perimeter. Organized like a contemporary MEB, the Fifth Marines, MAG-33, and associated support forces demonstrated the MAGTF's enormous potential as it became the stabilizing force in the perimeter's defence. Led by a single commander assisted by a fully integrated air-ground staff, the brigade became the prototype for subsequent MAGTF structure. Its dissolution in the wake of inter-service competition foreshadowed future attempts to separate the major subordinate elements of the MAGTF and colored our subsequent view of MAGTF employment.

An Overview of MAGTF Evolution

In the 1950's, because of the doctrinal relationships, World War II experience, and ground combat oriented nature of amphibious assaults, the role of the MAGTF Commander became muddled. His effectiveness was essentially reduced to planning and oversight functions. Authority for accomplishment of the landing force's mission migrated to the element, usually the battalion or

regimental landing team, having primary responsibility for the mission's success.

In the years following the Korean War, the Commandant of the Marine Corps convened a series of special study groups, chaired by Generals Harris and Hogaboom, to propose changes for the Marine Corps' future. Recognizing what they perceived to be an organizational dinosaur, the Harris and Hogaboom Boards recommendations eliminated the separate, integrated air-ground headquarters and staff. In its place they installed the subordinate element commander most decisively engaged as the commander of the entire task force. With the removal of the separate staff came the loss of the personnel and equipment formerly assigned. Command and control functions, especially those regarding aviation, could no longer performed from the MAGTF headquarters. The MAGTF Commander, now almost exclusively the BLT or RLT Commander, had barely the assets to fight his own command; also running the air and logistics war was impossible. As a result, the MAGTF became a ground combat element (GCE) oriented force supported by aviation and logistic elements. The integration of the task force found in the First Provisional Marine Brigade had been lost.

In order to reestablish the MAGTF as the Marine Corps warfighting organization, the Commandant published a CMC letter of 31 May 1960. This document served as a departure point for future development. The letter standardized the size of the various MAGTFs and the terms Marine Expeditionary Unit, Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and Marine Expeditionary Force were introduced. Unfortunately, the requirement for a separate MAGTF

headquarters was not reinstated. Instead, the Commandant again specified that the "decisive" component commander was the task force commander and therefore commanded the attached supporting units. While this reinforced the concept that command and control of the MAGTF should be exercised from a single headquarters, the lack of the separate staff and its supporting communications continued to severely hamper the commander's ability to control and fight the MAGTF. More significantly, while paying lip-service to the air-ground team, the fact of the support-supported relationship undermined the integration of the MAGTF. The concepts of operations and the outline plans were developed at the GCE (a.k.a. the MAGTF) headquarters; the aviation (ACE) and combat service (CSSE) elements were simply tasked to support it. As this arrangement became entrenched, the three subordinate elements became more isolated and through geographic separation, community orientation, and experience in Southeast Asia, they became more divergent. An entire generation of officers grew up focused almost exclusively on their own communities causing the viability of the MAGTF to suffer.

Following the Vietnam War the Marine Corps continued to refine both the MAGTF's structure and command relationships. The need for a separate headquarters and staff was recognized and provided for whenever a MAGTF was activated. With the establishment of standing MAGTFs, the creation of a permanent separate headquarters [more recently a command element] was revived, reestablishing the MAGTF commander's authority. The introduction of the special operations capability has influenced both the training of our

MAGTFs and to a lesser extent their command relationships. Finally, the assignment of a regional focus has increased both their corporate knowledge and experience produced a dramatic increase in real operational capability.

Today's MAGTF is defined by four basic characteristics:

- Marine forces will be operationally employed as MAGTFs.
- MAGTF's will be comprised of a ground combat, aviation combat, combat service support, and command element.
- That the MAGTF is a single entity, structured, equipped, and trained to fight as a unit.
- That the MAGTF commander, supported by a separate fully integrated air-ground-logistics staff fights the MAGTF as a whole.

These four points represent the bulk of our present MAGTF doctrine. We have defined the force as an integrated air-ground-logistics team whose specific character will be mission dependent. We have established labels for force packages based on their approximate size [i.e. MEU, MEB, MEF]. We have reiterated that these MAGTF's are expeditionary in nature and capable of self-sustainment for specified periods. We have said that MAGTF's are useful across the full spectrum of conflict and that they are can operate in the Joint/Combined arena. What remains to be done is to define the skills, training, and education required of the officers who will lead the MAGTF, plan its operations, and execute its campaigns.

Defining the MAGTF Officer

Before the notion of the MAGTF became embedded in our philosophy of warfare, it was usually sufficient for an officer to be proficient in the employment of his own arm, infantry, artillery, air, communications, supply, etc. He was prepared for assignments in his specialty by attendance at entry level schools, some in-service training, and a large amount of on-the-job training. The "system" produced officers who were usually satisfactory in their own communities but who were often narrow in their approach to warfighting and especially to the concept of integrating the MAGTF.

Under the guidance of recent commandants, and with the assistance of some new equipment, enlightened training rules and increased budgets, our separate communities have become individually well trained. While there is always room for improvement, our tankers, artillerymen, infantrymen, aviators, and logisticians are capable professionals. At the platoon, company/battery, squadron/battalion level we plan and execute with skill and, as recent experience has shown, with a high expectation of success. We generally demonstrate the individual and unit capabilities expected of us as professionals in our own communities, but as Marines we are charged to achieve something more: the merging of these skills and organizational capabilities into a truly integrated MAGTF. What is needed then are officers sufficiently familiar with the capabilities, limitations, issues, procedures, and terminology of all of the MAGTF's elements so that

they can function as effective members of the integrated command elements staff; officers whose focus is MAGTF capabilities rather than ACE, GCE, CSSE, or CE capabilities: MAGTF Officers.

As an Officer continues to develop, he should understand the interrelationship between his field and all the other fields within the Marine Corps. He should be an expert in tactics and techniques and should understand amphibious warfare and combined arms. He should be studying the Operational level of war. At the senior levels he should be fully capable of articulating, applying, and integrating MAGTF warfighting capabilities in a joint and combined environment and should be an expert in the art of war at all levels.²

It is one thing to plan and execute operations in the familiar structure of one's own community, it is another to perform those functions in an integrated air, ground, logistics, and command and control environment. Working within our own communities, we deal in familiar ideas, use familiar language, follow familiar logic, ask familiar questions, and adhere to familiar procedures. When we move outside of our community we are charged to perform in unfamiliar territory. We are exposed to methods and precepts which are foreign, may appear illogical, or which on the surface seem obviously wrong. Simply operating with these unfamiliar factors is difficult--learning to deal effectively with the capabilities and limitations of the other elements will require an adjustment to the mental framework of our staff officers and commanders so that we remove the parochial boundaries which separate the various communities, ACE, CSSE, GCE, and CE, and think of the MAGTF as a single, unified combined arms force.

The notion that an officer can deal effectively with the employment characteristics of four subordinate elements of the MAGTF raises the question of how we should educate our commanders and principal staff officers. How do we prepare them for the task of melding all the capabilities of the subordinate elements into a harmonious entity? To answer we must identify what it is that we want this MAGTF officer to be able to do.

The syllabus of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College contains the following paragraph under the heading "Educational Objectives":

The student shall be able to...plan and execute, originally and effectively, Marine Air Ground Task Force [MAGTF] (sic.) employment anywhere within the spectrum of conflict and articulate the capabilities of a MAGTF within a Joint/Combined environment with the primary focus at the Marine Expeditionary Force level."³

It is important to understand that we are not proposing to reeducate career infantrymen into pilots or pilots into supply officers. The disciplines of the various occupational fields are necessarily specific and they are an essential component of success at the tactical level. The reason for creating the MAGTF officer is to improve our ability to succeed at the operational level. Therefore, we must raise his focus from the specific capabilities of a unit or weapon system to those of the MAGTF as a whole.

To be sure specifics play an important role in the execution of our campaign. Just as clearly, a plan developed without a firm grasp of our own capabilities and limitations is doomed to

failure. Our MAGTF officer must be knowledgeable of the details of each element's capabilities, limitations, and their application before he can effectively integrate these into a true MAGTF capability. The various technologies and techniques of our Corps must be learned by the officer before he can become an operationally effective MAGTF commander or staff officer. Mastering this body of essentially encyclopedic knowledge is a vital part of his education, but the employment of a single element's specific techniques is only a tool by which the campaign is prosecuted. There is therefore, and even more important portion to the education of the MAGTF officer: We seek to train him to employ skillfully the capabilities of the individual components of the MAGTF while we raise his focus from the tactics and procedures of a single community to those of the MAGTF as a whole; to develop an understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the MAGTF [as defined by those of its subordinate elements], its potential roles, its structure as it relates to the mission, its command relationships and connectivity, and how its capabilities are focused on the operational and tactical levels of war.

I would propose that we expand the command and Staff College's previously quoted educational objective to:

The student shall be able to, originally and effectively, plan and execute MAGTF structuring, deployment, and employment anywhere within the spectrum of conflict; articulate the specific capabilities of the subordinate elements of the MAGTF; and articulate how those capabilities are integrated into a

synergistic MAGTF capability with primary focus on the Marine Expeditionary Force within the Joint/Combined environment.

To attain this objective would require that the emphasis of the MAGTF Education package of the Command and Staff College be revised to concentrate on the integration of the MAGTF's components rather than on the capabilities of the components themselves. While maintaining the focus at the operational level, the syllabus would divide the subject into two subsections: a body of facts such as weapons system capabilities and a body of concepts such as focus of effort, or compositing.

We begin by reviewing the capabilities of each subordinate element of the MAGTF, the students renew and update their specific knowledge first of their usual element, air, ground, or logistics, and then the capabilities of the other elements. The instruction reviews reference material and covers tabulated data, such as weapon ranges, but centers on capability and sustainment topics, such as weapon selection and usage rates, and on doctrinal procedures such as control of aircraft. This approach is intended to reinforce the specific information and serve as a foundation for the examination of warfighting concepts that will follow. The syllabus would then progress through an overview of significant issues effecting the MAGTF internally and externally: structure, compositing, command and control, intelligence, battle staff functioning and decision making, etc. are examined from the perspective of how they contribute to the attainment of a campaign's strategic military objective. Divergent positions, particularly those of other services, should be presented to

encourage the student to evaluate our own doctrine and procedures and develop flexibility in his approach to military issues.

Once the encyclopedic body of knowledge has been reinforced or in some cases, rebuilt, the syllabus moves on to examine specific topics relevant to creating and fighting the MAGTF. The instruction that will follow is presented in a chronological rather than functional format: planning, structuring, training, deploying, and employing the MAGTF. Its method is to examine the topics using case study and guided discussions and then apply the principles or concepts in short individual/small cell war games

We begin with an examination of Marine Corps warfighting concepts. Using the specific knowledge gained in the previous sub-course, we focus on the topics of maneuver warfare, commanders intent as it relates to mission orders, focus of effort, and the unity of the MAGTF as it translates into combined arms. The objective of this sub-course is to firmly ground the future MAGTF officer in the concepts and issues of the Marine Corps' style of fighting and to provide a framework for the follow-on instruction.

Moving to a study of the planning process, we build on the officer's prior review of specific capabilities of the MAGTF's subordinate elements. Beginning with the receipt of a mission and a directed outline plan, the students create the subordinate elements' plans and then integrate the plans and requirements by establishing priorities, sequencing their execution, and determining decision points. Planning for compositing is examined using alternative techniques. The Joint Operations Planning and Employment System (JPOES) formats are used when documents are

required. Throughout the planning process the focus on the strategic military objective is maintained by requiring the officer to justify his decisions by relating them to the objective.

From the planning process the course moves to developing a structure of the MAGTF. Beyond the prescription that all MAGTFs are composed of the same four subordinate elements, each is unique with a task organization built to respond to the mission, available troops, the enemy, and the time available to train and posture the force. Besides the familiar METT-T foundation, the MAGTF commander and his staff must consider the command, control, and connectivity of the force in determining its specific structure. The force composition must be balanced against available lift and combat service sustainment requirements before the final laydown of the MAGTF can be determined.

Once the MAGTF is formed, it must be trained as a single entity. The MAGTF commander must rapidly determine the organizational competence of his subordinate elements. He must be familiar enough with what their capabilities ought to be so that he and his staff can structure any necessary remedial training.

Of significantly greater importance than ascertaining subordinate's capability is the creation, through an integrated MAGTF training plan, of a true MAGTF capability. It is here that the synergism of the MAGTF is born. In order for this synergism to occur the MAGTF command element must be trained to function as a battle staff in a warfighting headquarters. The students, acting as staff officers in areas other than their occupational

specialty, build an integrated training plan for the MAGTF, oriented to specific mission requirements as part of a Joint Task Force. Using war gaming support, the students execute the command element's portion of the training plan. The opportunity also exists to designate the MAGTF as the JTF Commander with certain students serving as other service component or allied/host nation commanders for the command element/battle staff training.

Once the MAGTF is structured and trained, the officer students examine the deployment of the force to the designated theater. Using JOPES documentation the students examine the factors governing the prioritization, sequencing, movement, and establishment of the force in theater. It is appropriate here also to consider the process of compositing MAGTFs. Although this area is lacking in established doctrine, alternative schemes have been proposed. The students will apply each one and, using models and war game support, study their positive and negative effects. This section of the course emphasizes the effects of the compositing process on the cohesion of the MAGTF; its internal and external information flow, the need for operability and standardization, and the importance of clear delineation of authority.

Besides being a significant issue for MAGTF officer education, the study of compositing serves as a transition from the deployment phase to the employment phase of the curriculum. Once the MAGTF is postured in the designated theater, the course examines the application of specific capabilities to the mission requirements. The interdependency of the MAGTF's subordinate

elements is demonstrated through the use of synchronization matrices and execution checklists. Limitations to force sustainment and the tactical feasibility of operational plans are issues addressed using war gaming support. Additional emphasis is placed on intelligence tasking, collection, fusion analysis, and dissemination as the students serve again as members of battle staffs. Building on the previous command element battle staff instruction, the students apply lessons on internal staff functioning, information flow, timing, and decision making in a final comprehensive war game featuring the compositing of MEBs into a MEF in a joint scenario.

Throughout the course the students are encouraged to compile a list of detailed and specific questions designed to surface recurring or contentious issues, especially those effecting the employment of elements to which he would not normally be assigned. The process of compiling the list is designed to develop the officer's depth of understanding of the MAGTF's subordinate elements. By compiling a set of often-asked questions (including possible answers) he will increase his perspective on the MAGTF as a whole and develop flexibility in his approach to problem solving. The effect will be to blur the traditional lines that delineate the subordinate elements' monopoly of expertise in specific missions and thereby increase each communities' contribution to the strength of the team.

Since its birth, the MAGTF has evolved into an integrated, task-organized force package with demonstrated usefulness across the full spectrum of war. Its development has progressed from a

light naval landing force into a tailored combined arms task force armed with the most modern weapons and equipment. Our warfighting style is innovative and far sighted. The individual Marine is a well trained professional capable of performing his mission in any theater. There remains, however, a void in our ability to forge the better weapon that arises from the amalgamation of our separate capabilities. The key lies in institutionalizing a shift in our approach to NAGTF education. By focusing on the integration of the MAGTF's subordinate capabilities we create a group of Marine Officers who are educated to employ the MAGTF as an entity, across the spectrum of war, in a single service, Joint, or Combined environment: MAGTF Officers.

Footnotes

¹Clifford, p 109.

²FMFM-1, p 50.

³Command and Staff College Syllabus of Instruction, p 1.

Bibliography

- Ball, W. Frank "A Time for Change." Marine Corps Gazette, April 1988, 37-38.
- Clifford, Kenneth J. Progress and Purpose A Developmental History of the United States Marine Corps 1900-1970 Quantico, VA; U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.
- Davis, Richard L. "The Case for Officer Professional Education: A View from the Trenches." Airpower Journal, Winter 1989, 34-45.
- Etter, James P. "The Intellect and Officer Education." Marine Corps Gazette, April 1988, 34-36.
- Kennedy, William V. "What future for the Service War Colleges." Armed Forces Journal International, June 1988, 16-17.
- Linn, T.C. "The Composite MAGTF Concept." Marine Corps Gazette, August 1984, 22-24.
- Loehe, R.E. "The MAGTF Headquarters Element." Marine Corps Gazette, March 1981, 23-24.
- Moore, Marc A. and Croft, Alfred J. "Roles and Missions: A Traditional View." Marine Corps Gazette, June 1972, 18-24.
- "Permanent MAGTFs Established." Marine Corps Gazette, June 1985, 5.
- Riley, E.F. "Command Relationships in the MAGTF." Marine Corps Gazette, July 1985, 53-59.
- Webb, James H. "Roles and Missions: Time for a Change." Marine Corps Gazette, March 1972, 19-26.
- U.S. Marine Corps. Command and Staff College. Syllabus of Instruction. Quantico, 1990.
- U.S. Marine Corps. Command and Staff College. MAGTF Operations Syllabus. Quantico, 1990.
- U.S. Marine Corps. Command and Staff College. MAGTF Education Syllabus. Quantico, 1990.
- U.S. Marine Corps. Advanced Amphibious Study Group Concept Paper Guidelines for Forming a Composite MAGTF, Third Edition. Washington, 1985.